



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

superiors and inferiors, high and low, yet they merit not the name of levellers, who would argue for the equality of all men in some things. No man, however low, should be trampled upon, or his spirit wounded. The generous superior, will not grate the feelings of such, or sadden his soul by repeatedly impressing him with a sense of his power over him, or exercising it to his injury. It is the duty and honour of the great to endeavour to make men in low stations sit as light and easy as possible. The lower orders of society are the foundation upon which the higher are built. To disturb the foundation is to procure the ruin of the building.

If nature recoils against being driven, let it be led and allured. Harsh measures, continued or increased, will naturally make deeper impressions upon the suffering soul, and procure more embittered complainings, and might endanger the peace and stability of the empire, should they ever approximate to that oppression which makes a wise man mad.

Would superiors, by mildness and moderation, by reformation of abuses, by the pure administration of our glorious constitution, secure the affections of the multitude, and promote union and love among all ranks, they would establish a more effectual barrier against the encroachments of tyrants, and the desolating power of French usurpation, than even the wooden walls of old England, or the insular situation of the British dominions. S. E.

Ballinahinch.

To the Editor of the Belfast Magazine.

SIR,
THE avowed intention of your useful miscellany being the improvement of the minds and morals of your countrymen, I beg leave through its medium to call the attention of your Readers to a subject which demands their most serious consideration.

At this time of dearth of provisions, and want of employment for the working people, the private distillation of whiskey, is carried on to such an extent as to be truly alarming to every real friend to Ireland.

I am extremely sorry, that the

subject has escaped the notice of those who are much abler to discuss it than I am—but I hope from a few hints I shall throw out, some more competent hand may be induced to take it up; and I entertain no doubt, but that when the practice is shown in its true colours it will then appear to be fraught with so many evils to the community, that every rational man will lend his assistance for the suppression of a trade as injurious to the real interests, as it is destructive to the morals, of a large share of the population of the country.

The illicit distiller, that he may conciliate his neighbours, and purchase their connivance and secrecy, is obliged to treat them most profusely with his whiskey; and he hands it about amongst them, with a liberality which procures for him the character of an honest-hearted, worthy fellow, with whom there is no harm, but that he is striving to make a livelihood by humbugging the guager, who is allowed to be one of society's greatest pests. By this means a system of drunkenness and debauchery, is introduced among the farmers, who when doing their duty are the most useful class of men in society.

Unhappily it is too much the disposition of those men to suppose there can be no harm in getting drunk, provided they spend no money; never once reflecting, that the expense of spirits, is but a small part of the real injury sustained by the inordinate use of them: loss of time when drinking, rendering themselves incapable of business after it; loss of health, and the bad example to their children; these are serious injuries indeed, whether viewed in a physical or moral point.

The education of their children (this prime duty of man) is not only neglected, but they are so familiarized to scenes of riot and debauchery, as almost naturally, to fall into the same dissipated habits with their unhappy parents; they hear dreadful vengeance vowed against the guager, and his assistants, in their presence, the question is perhaps often discussed whether it is not highly praiseworthy to shoot a guager in defence of

smuggled whiskey; when the decision is always in the affirmative. They are taught to believe, that the revenue laws are a system of oppression, and that it is therefore just to resist them; and the conclusion drawn is, that if one law is bad and oppressive, others may be considered in the same light, and thus from step to step they go on in moral depravity, and attain to a degree of ferocity which renders them fitter associates for the tyger in the forest, than members of a civilized society.

When an exciseman visits a neighbourhood of this description, on the business of still-hunting, as it is called, the whole posse turn out against him, nothing intimidated by the soldiers with whom he is accompanied; not only the persons immediately concerned with the business, but the whole population of the neighbourhood opposes him in battle array. A serious conflict ensues; sometimes the gauger succeeds, and sometimes the smuggler is victorious, but seldom, very seldom indeed, an affray of this kind ends but with the loss of the lives or limbs of some of the parties; then follow trials at assizes, where witness is marshalled against witness, in the court-house, as they were in the field of battle; perjuries and prevarications are committed; the gauger if alive prosecutes with rancour; the smuggler defends himself by the perjuries of his friends; and the trial ends in the conviction of some of those deluded wretches, who terminate their miserable existence at the gallows.

Such has been the state of the country for a length of time; a kind of predatory war is waged in the bosom of our country, wherein the gauger and the smuggler are the belligerents; and the cruelties practised by each on the other, are apologized for, by the one in doing the duties of his office; and by the other in defending his property.

And unfortunately the parties being so familiarized with scenes of blood, that the moral character is totally changed, and from being peaceable and quiet citizens, they become so sanguinary and ferocious as to be dangerous men in society.

Some time ago when government had it in contemplation to permit distillation from grain; many were alarmed, that such a measure would be productive of famine; and public meetings were held for the purpose of petitioning against it; parliament lent an attentive ear to the representations made in those petitions, and the restrictions were continued, which restrictions operate in a directly opposite way to that intended; the markets for grain being ever since more scarce than before. When the measure was under discussion, grain rose a little in price, in consequence of speculation, but the markets were well supplied; but as soon as it was found that the distilleries would not be allowed to work, the grain disappeared, and though it fell a little in price, it did not fall in the ratio that was expected.

The reason of this to me is obvious, the smuggler dare not go to a public market to purchase grain, lest he should raise suspicion; but he travels the country round, and purchases at the house of the farmer; pays him his price, and conveys it away free of expense to him, by which means, in markets that have been well supplied, scarce three sacks of grain are to be seen on a market day.

The restrictions on licensed stills will therefore avail little, provided the private ones are suffered to work; and since the prohibition has been confirmed, they have gone on with redoubled vigour. I have good reason to believe, that more grain is now consumed by the private distilleries, than all the licensed stills would consume were they double the number, and at full work; for, allowing that they produce no more whiskey, they will use more grain. The smuggler from ignorance and the hurry with which he performs his operations, consumes more grain than the licensed distiller, who has a scientific knowledge of his business, and works on a regular plan. In this case the restrictions on the legal distilleries giving encouragement to the smuggler is not only useless but prejudicial, inasmuch as it induces a greater consumption of grain.

It is astonishing how narrow and

confined are the views of man. The merchant who buys grain for exportation, meets the execrations of the working people; if he loads a vessel with grain or oatmeal, a mob can soon be collected, to strip her of her sails, and prevent her sailing, though the exportation of grain or meal, instead of being a disadvantage to the country, is one of its greatest benefits. Grain used in distillation is lost to the whole human race; grain exported goes to feed our fellow creatures. Grain used in distillation debauches the farmer, blunts his faculties and casts a damp upon his industry; grain exported, encourages the farmer to improve his land and rewards his industry. Grain consumed in distillation, encourages us to misapply our riches and leaves for our inheritance poverty and broken constitutions alone; but grain exported brings the riches of other countries into our own; it enriches the merchant, who, by giving employment to the manufacturer, is serviceable to the very persons who so loudly complain against the trade. In short, so long as we have one uncultivated cultivable acre of land in the country, the exportation of grain should be encouraged; and so long as we wish to preserve health of body or peace of mind, distillation should be discouraged; every encouragement should be held out to the farmer, to induce him to improve his land; and if possible to make one acre produce as much this year, as two acres produced last year; for the interest of every man in the community, is identified with that of the farmer; for in proportion as he is successful the necessities of life are dear or cheap, plenty or scarce; and in proportion as he is enriched, the rest of the people are enriched; he enriches the merchant, the manufacturer, and the country gentleman.

It is a most lamentable sight to contemplate one of those meal mobs, who violate every principle and every duty they owe to themselves, and to society, by madly attempting what constantly produces the very effect which they wish to prevent; how different would be the conclusion, were that energy they use in a riotous

manner to prevent exportation of meal, directed in a legal constitutional way, in support of the civil magistrate, for the suppression of private stills? very different indeed, instead of the actors risking their necks, they would deserve the praise and the thanks of every good man, and would do more towards reducing the price of provisions, than if they were to burn every ship, in which meal would be attempted to be exported.

At some of the public meetings which have been held, for the purpose of petitioning parliament to continue the restrictions on distillation from grain, by the opposers of the measure, the bad consequences of private distilling have been hinted at, but by no means gone into, to that extent which the subject required; no pains were taken to obtain that information, whereby the public might be guided; and being mere assertions, without the shadow of proof to support them, the argument fell to the ground; when it is probable had the following, or a similar statement been laid before them, the conclusion would have been otherwise.

The licensed stills in Ireland, when at work, yield a revenue of about 1,200,000*l* per annum; for the supply of those stills, a quantity of grain, amounting to 3,500 barrels daily, would be required. On the north-west circuit of Ulster, last assizes, fines were levied off five counties, amounting to 31,200*l*. for illicit stills found in them; the fine for each still being 50*l*. it would appear that in those five counties, 624 stills had been seized; now, allowing that the remaining four counties of this province contained no more than a proportion of that number, not taking into view the many stills, which no doubt remain undetected, 1,143 stills have, been employed in this province alone; taking these at an average of 50 gallons each, and allowing, from interruptions, that they will only use five barrels of grain in a day each, a quantity of grain for their daily supply will be required, amounting to 5,715 barrels, which is 2,215 barrels per day more than would be required for the whole of the licensed stills in the kingdom. Here we have, in one province alone, a consumption of grain by private stills, far

exceeding what would keep all the regular stills in the kingdom at work, and a revenue of 1,200,000*l.* lost to the country.

In this statement, the quantity of grain is far under-rated, as is the number of stills in the province; nor is any value laid on the grains and wash, destroyed by the smugglers, by burying them under ground, and swimming them away in rivers; this loss is not by any means inconsiderable, as the appearance of our fleshmarket evinces.

Some short sighted persons, considering that the country is overburthened with taxes, make no account of defrauding the revenue; but let such persons reflect, that government must and will be supported; that if one tax is not sufficient, another will be laid on. If the excise does not produce enough, the hearth and window tax must make up the deficiency—and let such people also reflect, that in consuming whiskey illegally distilled, they are paying the full amount of the tax, not into the hands of government, but into the hands of the distillers of, and dealers in contraband whiskey; and thus they subject themselves voluntarily to the payment of a tax, which they blame the government for imposing.

In taverns, where smokey whiskey is sold, as much is charged for it as for old Antigua rum; and if we purchase it by the gallon, we will pay from two to three shillings more for it than for the whiskey that has paid the excise duty—but then we are told, it is good *malt whiskey, real peat reck, or right good pot-yeen*. Thus we pay a heavier tax, than that upon spirits regularly imported or distilled, and not one farthing of this tax reaches the coffers of the state, but goes into the purses of those dealing in the article. From all those circumstances, I hope, Mr. Editor, it will appear evident, that it is as much the interest as it is the duty of every good citizen, to use all his endeavours to discourage and suppress this practice, so destructive to the morals of thousands, and so contrary to the real interests of the community at large.

I have often regretted to find the land proprietors come in for a large share of blame, in conniving at this

nefarious trade; having frequently heard it roundly asserted, that if they thought proper they could put a final end to it; I hope, however, for the honour of human nature, such insinuations have been groundless, and that the enlightened country gentlemen of Ireland are far from being deserving of such aspersions.

Convinced I am, that no class of men in the empire, are possessed of more loyalty, can boast a nicer sense of honour; nor would go further to protect or support our glorious constitution in church and state. Under this conviction, it is repugnant to my feelings to suppose that such men, for the paltry consideration of receiving a higher rent for their lands, would connive at a trade destructive to the revenue of the country, ruinous to the morals of their tenantry, and contrary to the true interests of the nation.

I am, however, well aware, that no class of men have more in their power as to the suppression of this abominable and ruinous trade; their influence as landlords, and the power of many, as magistrates, give them opportunities of discouraging and suppressing it, not within the reach of any other class of his Majesty's subjects—and at no time, nor on any occasion were they ever more imperiously called on to exert themselves—their own honour, the welfare and prosperity of their tenantry, and the general interest of the country demand it of them. Let them personally examine the premises of their tenantry—let them remonstrate with them—let them threaten them; and provided this has not the proper effect, let them punish them with the utmost rigour of the law.

I would also recommend it to the clergy of all persuasions, to interest themselves on this subject. If the true interest of morality is an object with them, let them reason with their flocks, both in and out of the pulpit—with those concerned in the trade, and those not concerned—point out to the one party the injury they are doing to society by carrying on such a trade—and to the other party, by encouraging it, or in not using their endeavours to suppress it.

I would also recommend parochial meetings and associations, to institute inquiries, and enter into resolutions to

discourage and suppress it all in their power.

I have heard it suggested, that government should increase the fines on the parishes where the stills are found, and make it felony to be found working at the business; this is a measure I hope the good sense and spirit of the people will render unnecessary, as our statute book already groans with pains and penalties, and I should be exceedingly sorry to find that my countrymen were so dead to their own interests as to have them increased on this occasion. D.

Belfast, May 12, 1809.

For the Belfast Monthly Magazine.

ON THE WILD IRISH GIRL, AND IDA OF ATHENS.

THE insertion of a paper addressed to you, which appeared in the last number of the Magazine, induces me to trouble you with some remarks on two of Miss Owenson's novels. I am enthusiastically attached to the Irish character, and to my country, but that attachment does not lead me entirely to overlook the defects of the Irish. I am anxious that our authors should rather study the useful, than the ornamental and showy in their writings. High sounding words, and finely rounded periods may catch the attention of the frivolous, but seldom mislead the judgment of the sensible and well informed. Female writers are frequently met with, and the inferiority of intellect is not now so confidently asserted as formerly. I believe it is entirely our own fault if we are the inferior sex; but our attention being so often turned to trifling and unimportant pursuits, makes us greater triflers than we ought. Much of our character through life depends on our education in early life; even so late as fifty years ago, females got very little education; but a great improvement has now taken place, and I earnestly and warmly entreat my countrywomen to go on improving, and not to consider that after leaving school our education is finished, but that we may improve every day.

My earnest wishes for the character of my countrywomen, induces me to offer some remarks on the "Wild Irish Girl," which I am confident is not a

true delineation of the Irish character, for I have a better opinion of our countrywomen than to suppose their whole attention is occupied in the manner Glorvina's too generally was. The scene in the boudoir is unworthy of a female pen, and I cannot think highly of the refinement of a mind which was capable of imagining such a scene. In my former paper I mentioned Miss Owenson's heroines being so much attached to coquetry, and as a sample I shall refer to the 2d volume of the Wild Irish Girl, pages 236, 239, and 240, where something of the refinement of coquetry is discovered. Many other passages equally objectionable, are met with in this book. As I am

"Still pleased to praise, yet not afraid to blame:"

I must say there are some excellent descriptions in the Wild Irish Girl. I began to read it with the highest expectations, and was delighted with the half of the first volume, which is excellent. I felt real interest in the story of Murtoch O'Shaughnassey. Miss Owenson seems to have caught some distinguishing traits in the character of the Irish peasantry. Father John is excellent, and she deserves much credit for drawing the character of a benevolent Irish Priest. The description of the castle of Inismore, the Prince, Glorvina, and the old nurse, would be highly interesting to those who are not acquainted with Ireland, or Irish manners, but the tale loses a great deal of its interest when we know that no such castles are now in existence. The furniture of the castle is rather incongruous. If Miss Owenson's motive for writing this book were to reconcile English prejudices, or the prejudices of some of the inhabitants of Ireland, against their Catholic neighbours her motive was laudable and praise-worthy; but why in sketching the character of an Irishwoman need she have made Glorvina a flirt and a coquet? Such I hope is not the distinguishing trait in the character of an Irishwoman. Miss Edgeworth's tales have a simplicity that Miss Owenson's writings do not possess. Miss Edgeworth's Moral and Popular Tales may be read with advantage by persons of all ages. Her sentiments are so excellent, and moral, that she must always be considered an honour to her sex,